

(Washington, DC) -

After attending President Barack Obama's announcement on Monday to unveil a \$15 billion package that helps small business, Congresswoman Debbie Halvorson (IL-11) heralded the plan while expressing great displeasure over recent AIG developments.

The plan is a new effort that assists small businesses and entrepreneurs in creating jobs and spurring economic recovery. It focuses on increasing small business lending at a time when obtaining credit for daily operations and capital investments has been difficult.

"As someone who has owned and operated a small business, I understand how critical it is to be able to obtain credit," said Halvorson. "I applaud this first step to make lending available to small businesses allowing them to make investments necessary to drive job creation and innovation."

The small business plan announcement came after a weekend of backlash against AIG when it was revealed that the insurance giant planned to pay \$165 million in bonuses and retention pay to employees. As one of the first beneficiaries of government assistance, AIG also received money under the Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP) - also known as the bank bailout. With AIG receiving more than \$170 billion in taxpayer assistance to date, the payment of \$165 million in bonuses and retention pay does not sit well with many Americans, including Congresswoman Halvorson.

"I'm clearly disgusted," said Halvorson. "It's outrageous for AIG to even think it's OK to give out bonuses and the like when they are operating on taxpayer-financed life support. The way AIG is doing business is a prime example of why I opposed the financial bailout during the campaign -and releasing the second half of funds in January. This nonsense must stop once and for all."

Part of the new small business plan introduced by President Obama addresses the concerns of those who "play by the rules," but are consistently hindered by a credit market in poor condition. Now, businesses with strong credit histories will see additional lending opportunities through the Small Business Administration (SBA).

"I'm very pleased with these new efforts that will assist small businesses - and I commend the administration for their support of this group who are the 'lifeblood' of the American economy," said Halvorson. "Small businesses and entrepreneurs drive our economy and job growth - and it is pertinent that they be healthy and successful as we move toward economic recovery."

Halvorson is a member of the House Committee on Small Business and also is a member of the New Democrat Coalition, a group of pro-growth, moderate Democrats committed to fiscal responsibility and efficient government.